

Safely Cooking and Eating in Bear Country

If you are camping in bear country, take appropriate precautions to keep your campsite as unattractive to bears as possible. A key element here is to keep your food out of the reach of bears, whether you are cooking, eating, snacking, performing other camping duties or sleeping.

Put the food away in a suitable shelter or container. This is the simplest method, provided that the place in which you put your food is secure and bear-proof. Examples of food storage methods that prevent bear access include placing your food:

- In metal food lockers. Some campgrounds provide metal food lockers. Use them. If they are full, ask neighboring campers if they can share some space.
- In a cabin. Some campgrounds provide cabins with shelves or food lockers and a locked front door. Place all food in here and make sure that the door is firmly closed. Label food if in a shared area.
- In a bear-resistant canister. Note that some parks now require the use of bear resistant food containers. If you are hiking, these canisters can be an excellent purchase, or they are frequently available for hire on popular hiking routes. Place all food into the canister and screw together. Keep away from sleeping area.

Create a bear hang. If you do not have access to either a shelter or container, a bear hang is the best option in many cases, although be aware that the thinking has changed in many parks to favor bear-resistant canisters because bears have worked out the trick behind bear hangs in many places. If it is still okay to use a bear hang in the area you are camping in, you can make it by:

1. Selecting a suitable spot between two trees, at least 100 yards (91 meters) from your tent. Do not hang it over berry patches, obvious bear trails etc.
2. Stretching a rope between two trees that are not too close together. To get the rope up high enough, attach a small rock or other weight at one end to provide the momentum to throw it upwards. The bear hang should be at least 12 feet high (4 meters) and 4 feet (1.4 meters) away from each tree.
3. Attaching a sealed sack to the middle of the rope.
4. Pulling the rope up and tying it securely to the other tree.

Handle food with care. For the best bear-detering actions, obey this list:

- Do cook at least 100 yards (91 meters) from your tent.
- Do change clothes after cooking and keep those clothes elsewhere from your sleeping area.
- Do not ever leave food unattended, not even for moment to go to the stream to get water. Make sure it is guarded by others at the campsite or is put away.
- Do not ever take food into the tent. This is crucial or a bear may be tempted to rip open the tent to forage. Check children's backpacks, pockets and other containers to make sure no candy or cookies have been sneaked in or simply forgotten about. It is very easy to overlook strongly scented candies, chewing gum, and chocolates without realizing.

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- Do not eat or cook in your tent.

Avoid cooking strong smelling foods. Foods with strong odors will be very attractive to bears. Bacon is a well-known bear attractant. Probably whatever food makes you drool at the smell of it is an indicator that it will attract bears. Be careful in the food choices that you make, especially where heating intensifies the smell.

Dispose of all food scraps, food particles, leftovers, and containers properly. Dispose of all food scraps, food particles, leftovers, and containers properly.

- Use bear-proof trashcans.
- Wash plates, cookware and utensils at least 100 yards away from the camp and preferably capture all food pieces and dispose of them in the bear-proof trash cans.
- Leave a clean campsite. Do not leave uneaten food, food scraps, garbage or empty cans etc. on the campsite. Leave it as clean, if not cleaner, than you found it.